sensibility, they were sometimes perceived as effete cowards. However, the code of honour and its associated activities served as a convenient foil for medical and other moralists. It was a useful target in their promotion of a new gentlemanly ideal and in their general Christian moralizing. Percival's anti-duelling stance clearly identified him as a certain type of moral and social reformer.

While Percival tried to define his ideal of the morally upright, scientifically concerned gentleman by contrasting it with the duelling classes, he could not deny that medical men were famous for another sort of contest, the vitriolic paper duels and embarrassing theoretical disputes which plagued the profession. He clearly had insight into the psycho-pathology of honour in both these cases. While his contribution to solving the problems of professional rivalry is difficult to assess, his intent was undoubtedly reforming. Moreover his membership in the anti-establishment Medical Society of London is some evidence at least that his medico-political activities were consonant with his moralizing.[147]

The preceding discussion of Percival's education, career and work has emphasized his liberal and reformist credentials. This is necessary because some modern scholarship on medical ethics tends to conflate the self-declared 'élite' status of physicians such as Percival with membership in the traditional medical establishment and to associate prominent physicians across the board with the ruling classes.[148] Percival did not carry the gold-topped cane of a Fellow of the Royal College but at the same time, he was quite unlike the social reformer of later generations. He and his mainly Edinburgh-trained peers saw themselves, and were seen by others, as élite, gentlemen physicians. But an examination of Percival's own intentions and the medical and social context of his work makes it clear that the élitism and gentlemanliness were based on ideas already prepared in Gregory's Baconianism. Medicine could only be advanced by science, which must be open to the public, and the character of the scientist himself was crucial to this enterprise. It was on this latter point that Percival went beyond Gregory. The Scot had been attracted to the ideal combination of liberal education and independent fortune in the make-up of the professional gentleman. Percival's vision not only was much more middle-class, it also had a different institutional focus in the hospital. The pursuit of medical science and its application to practical medical care were gradually united within the one institutional framework, and the profession's mastery of this new medicine could indeed make it into a gentlemanly élite, unsurpassed by any previous generation of scholarly or philosophical physician.

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